

IN THE CLAIMS

Please rewrite the claims to read as follows:

546 D<sup>1</sup>

9.

A process for the production of plants with improved growth

characteristics, which comprises the following steps:

- a) transfer and integration of a DNA sequence coding for a prokaryotic asparagine synthetase in the plant genome; wherein said DNA sequence is linked to a regulatory sequence for the expression of said DNA sequence and import of the asparagine synthetase into the chloroplast or plastids of a plant cell and wherein said plant cell exhibits the biochemical activity of the imported asparagine synthetase in its chloroplasts or plastids;
- b) transfer and integration of a chloroplastic glutamine synthetase gene or a portion thereof into the plant genome which encodes and expresses an anti-sense RNA of said gene wherein the DNA sequence is linked to a regulatory sequence for the transcription of said DNA sequence and
- c) regeneration of intact and fertile plants from the transformed cells.

C<sup>1</sup>

11.

A plant cell obtainable by a method as claimed in claim 9, wherein

a prokaryotic ammonium specific asparagine synthetase exhibits the biochemical activity of the imported asparagine synthetase in its chloroplasts or plastids and which contains a gene construct which provides a reduced level of expression of endogenous chloroplastic glutamine synthetase activity.

C<sup>2</sup>

Sub  
D<sup>2</sup>

sub D<sup>3</sup> \

12. A plant, seeds, propagule or propagation material containing cells according to claim 11.

13. A gene construct comprising a gene encoding a prokaryotic ammonium specific asparagine synthetase operatively linked to a regulatory sequence for the expression of said gene and import of the asparagine synthetase into the chloroplasts or plastids of a plant cell and wherein said plant cell exhibits the biochemical activity of the imported asparagine synthetase in its chloroplasts or plastids.

C2

14. A gene construct according to claim 13, wherein the asparagine synthetase gene is an E. coli asparagine synthetase gene with a chloroplastic leader peptide at its N-terminus and which leader peptide is a modified transit peptide form the small subunit of the Ribulosebisphosphat carboxylase from pea containing a duplication of 20 amino acids compared to the natural transit peptide.

15. A vector containing a gene construct according to claim 14 which gene construct comprises a sequence which encodes a chloroplastic leader peptide at its N-terminus and which leader peptide is a modified transit peptide form the small subunit of the Ribulosebisphosphat carboxylase from pea containing a duplication of 20 amino acids compared to the natural transit peptide.

16. A plant cell transformed with the gene construct according to claim 13 or with vector according to claim 15.

#### REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request, pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.17(a) and 1.136(a), a three-month extension of time, from **April 17, 2001**, up to and including to **July 17, 2001**, to respond to the January 17, 2001 Office Action (Final Rejection). Enclosed herewith is a check in